

A COMPANY IN THE LSF

The Execution of the “Hub-and-Spoke” Concept in the Logistical Support Facility

BY MAJOR GREG STROUD

While the design and purpose of the United States’ global military presence can be debated, it is a fact that the U.S. military operates across the world. Despite the perception that global communication networks and exponentially interconnected Internet systems are making the world smaller, the physical distances between a crisis and those who respond remain the same. For the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that the U.S. will abandon its capability to respond to crises at anytime, anywhere. To accomplish this, the U.S. will continue to utilize allies and partners to stage personnel and logistics. A “hub-and-spoke” concept executed from the Logistical Support Facility in Singapore is just one such place that SOF can use to coordinate and facilitate missions to support a wide variety of operations.

Operations conducted away from the parent or originating country always require a staging base or facility to conduct logistical support. These sites can be referred to as “hubs” and serve as a central location from which to support operations. As logistical support and communications move from the hub to the operation, “spokes” are created. While the hub-and-spoke concept is not new, Maj. Gen. Norman Brozenick, former Special Operations Command

- Pacific commander 2011-2013, sought to employ this concept in the Pacific Command area of responsibility. He envisioned increased efficiency from this concept by supporting current operational missions, stationing a forward special operations force presence that could react to contingencies, and enable cost savings while utilizing a logistical base. It is important to note that this cost-efficient vision of operation was developed well before the current era of fiscal restraints imposed by sequestration.



In March 2013, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) deployed an operational detachment-bravo to Singapore to support current operations that began with two operational detachments-alpha executing a joint combined exchange training event in Nepal. These detachments utilized two non-standard aviation platforms to deploy into Nepal significantly reducing the military signature and thus improving operational security and force protection. While the NSAv aircraft are useful for keeping a low military signature, their capabilities are significantly less than a MC-130 or C-17. These aircraft operate with a much reduced payload that is inversely proportional to the distance traveled. Typically, all baggage and equipment must be floor loaded and entry is limited by the cargo door which is approximately a 3x4 ft opening. While these constraints present challenges, these aircraft are more than capable of getting units in and out of austere locations with a sufficient balance of gear and personnel. With proper planning and fuel stops programmed, one aircraft moved two ODAs and 2,000 lbs. of equipment into the mountainous country of Nepal with no issues.

Upon arrival into Nepal, the teams were faced with a significant challenge. Another scheduled military training event in Nepal severely affected the JCET, resulting in numerous changes to the schedule and training locations on short notice. With the ODB(-) in Singapore and its access to a secure communications infrastructure ranging from HF to satellite communications, the ODB proved to be a vital link between the ODAs, 1st Battalion, the American Embassy in Kathmandu and SOCPAC which enabled the detachments on the ground to receive immediate support in coordinating changes in training sites, resources and dates. With this increased level of support, the detachments on the ground salvaged the training event and gained invaluable training in the high altitude environment of the Himalayan Mountains. At the end of the Nepal mission, the ODB coor-

minated a complex movement of the ODAs from Nepal to the Philippines requiring multiple lifts of aircraft to redeploy two detachments worth of equipment, training ammunition and personnel over a one-week period back to home station and another mission in the Philippines. One detachment began training with Philippine police units to assist them in countering narcoterrorism in their country while the remaining detachment continued on, redeploying to Okinawa. During this time, the ODB also facilitated the deployment of two other ODAs from Okinawa into Indonesia and Malaysia where they trained with Indonesian and Royal Malaysian SOF, respectively. Each of these units provided unique training opportunities that not only built interoperability between partnered forces, but also lasting relationships.

Furthermore, the forward location also enabled the company to respond to emerging opportunities to improve relationships. Some Indonesian military units with a history of human-rights violations have been trying to rebuild trust and confidence in their ability to abide by international law. These same Indonesian units operate in a counterterrorism role for Indonesia and the U.S. has an interest in furthering the capabilities of these units in order to more effectively counter both domestic terrorists and terrorists abroad. As part of this process and in the interest of building a positive relationship with this

Indonesian unit, U.S. military representatives in the country organized a subject-matter expert exchange to further their professional education. The ODB

rapidly responded to this emerging opportunity and re-tasked an ODA to plan and prepare. With little notice, the company was prepared to execute this SMEE within 10 days of receiving the emerging requirement.

As part of a forward SOF presence, the ability to respond quickly to emerging events is critical, whether it is a SMEE, humanitarian crisis or other contingency event like disaster relief.

Moreover, threat reporting began building intelligence on a credible threat to U.S. personnel within a U.S. consulate. This threat caused the SOCPAC Commander to consider staging rapid response forces closer to the potential crisis site. With the ODB already forward, one option discussed was to stage elements from the ODB in a place to facilitate reception, staging, onward-movement and integration for the response forces, greatly increasing their ability to quickly react to the potential crisis by decreasing the amount of coordination required to become fully operational.

By utilizing NSAv aircraft for deployment and redeployment, the company saved hundreds of thousands of dollars that were used for training instead of funding military aircraft for travel in and out of numerous locations throughout the PACOM AOR. Nepal's budget for training was \$330,000. If the company could not have used the NSAv for deployment into Nepal, military aircraft costs would have totaled more than \$200,000 to utilize a MC-130 to conduct the deployment and drastically reduced the training opportunities for the ODAs on the ground. Additional cost savings came from the fact that the company utilized LSF contracted lodging instead of hotels and the company deployed on partial per diem taking advantage of a food contract that provided two meals a day. Total cost savings added up to more than half a million dollars allowing 1st Bn., 1 SFG(A) to support additional team training objectives.

This concept will return value to 1st SFG(A) as it continues to execute missions around the PACOM AOR. 1st SFG(A) in the future will utilize this concept to deploy a full ODB and six ODAs to conduct up to 12 theater campaign-plan engagements in a six month period. These teams would execute one JCET training event and then transition to the next JCET utilizing the logistics and aircraft to reset and deploy while staying in theater versus redeploying back to the United States and then deploying back into theater. Utilizing the LSF in this manner would save hundreds of thousands of dollars alone in transportation costs per planned engagement. This way of operating over the course of a year would amount to millions.

In closing, ODB 1110's deployment to the LSF-Singapore from March to June 2013 validated COMSOPAC's vision of a forward staged SOF presence in support of Admiral Bill McRaven's (current Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command) Global SOF Network utilizing the "hub-and-spoke" methodology. This deployment demonstrated the value of a forward-deployed Special Forces company through supporting missions from infiltration through exfiltration, positioning a forward SOF presence that could react to contingencies, and enabling cost savings while utilizing the logistical base. The "hub-and-spoke" methodology creates efficiencies of support and increases value to mission that should be replicated in the future on a consistent basis. This would assist in creating lasting relationships between U.S. SOF and engaged countries that would improve the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in permissive, uncertain or hostile environments during future conflicts. Finally, the LSF-Singapore is just one of the many potential locations that will improve the responsiveness of SOF to engage operationally while building the Global SOF Network that will assist the U.S. military in securing the global commons and ensure world access to markets and resources — this concept plays a significant role in America's Rebalance towards Asia. **SW**

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